

Oversight Report on Offsite Impacts in Montana (EY 2014)

For the purpose of oversight, a negative off-site impact is defined as anything resulting from a surface coal mining and reclamation activity or operation that causes a negative effect on people, land, water, or structures outside the permit area. In addition, the impact on the resource must be substantiated and be related to mining and reclamation activity. It must be outside the area authorized by the permit for conducting mining and reclamation activities. As a part of Evaluation Year (EY) 2014 oversight, the Montana Department of Environmental Quality (MT DEQ) and the Office of Surface Mining Reclamation and Enforcement (OSMRE) - Denver Field Division (DFD) – Casper Area Office (CAO) develop an annual Performance Agreement to evaluate and document the effectiveness of the Montana program in protecting the environment and the public from negative off-site impacts resulting from surface and underground mining operations in Montana.

Several sources of information have been selected for identifying off-site impacts. These include but are not limited to: MT DEQ and DFD inspection reports, enforcement actions, civil penalty assessments, citizens' complaints, special studies and information from other environmental agencies. If an off-site impact is identified, the sources of information and the basis used to identify and report these impacts will be clearly recorded.

Field evaluations for off-site impacts were conducted during routine inspections by the MT DEQ. During the evaluation year, the DFD conducted one complete inspection, three partial oversight inspections, and two site visits to evaluate an OSMRE Excellence in Surface Mining Award nomination and coal processing waste disposal. Off-site impacts were not identified during the reporting period. Accordingly, one hundred percent of the thirteen inspectable units in Montana were free of negative off-site impacts during the evaluation year.